



On the road to Shanghai

Aruba's special athletes show their stuff at Certified Mega Mall during "Awareness Week"

Aruba's team of fourteen special athletes got a few steps closer to Shanghai, China, where the 2007 International Special Olympics will be held in October. The ping-pong team gave a demonstration of their prowess while their cohorts "shook their can" encouraging islanders to contribute to their traveling expenses at the Certified Mega Mall on Thursday afternoon.

Deshaneira Mohammad, Zaina Maduro, Jhorzy Arias and Maikel Wouters, who will represent their island displayed their form with the assistance of coach Gervasio Arias during the training session at the supermarket entrance. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they "stopped traffic" into the supermarket, and many islanders dug into their pockets to assist them in their goal of getting to China, filling up one of the donation cans that can be found at various locations around the island, including the Eagle Bowling Palace.

There are only a few months to go, and a variety of fundraisers have brought the Special Olympics team closer to their goal, but they are still several thousand florins short of what is needed to get them to China. They are training hard in preparation, and will compete in Track & Field, Swimming, Ping-Pong and Bowling. Arturo Werleman, Director of the Special Olympics Committee of Aruba and the Foundation for the Mentally Challenged expressed that the trip to China will be a "wonderful experience for the athletes, and the competitions provide them with self-esteem and acceptance. We have many talented and accomplished athletes that have brought home gold, silver and bronze medals from competitions around the Caribbean, performing very well against more practiced special athletes, and we are sure they will do well in Shanghai."

Awareness week closes with a ceremony at the Eagle Bowling Palace on Saturday with the presentation of the Aruba's bowling team and a donation by their corporate sponsors, Digicel.